



# family @ linkages

NEWSLETTER

A way to connect families of children and youth with special needs in Michigan  
with information, education and support

## Preparing for the Holiday Season

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Felices fiestas Joyeuses fêtes  
Καλές γιορτές! आपकी छुट्टियाँ आनंददायक हों! Kellemes ünnepek  
تَعْطِيلَات خُوش بَگذره Sărbători fericite С праздником! Срећни празници

**Happy Holidays!**

Frohe Feiertage Buone feste 楽しいホリデーシーズンを 海피 할러데이즈  
Nghỉ lễ vui vẻ Wesolych świąt Boas festas 节日快乐 Sretni blagdani  
Prettige feestdagen Veselé svátky

Holidays can be a difficult time for families of children with special needs. The hustle and bustle of festive events can disrupt schedules and create additional stress. But it doesn't have to. Preparing for the season can make it much tolerable and enjoyable. To help families survive the holidays, AbilityPath.org developed Holiday Survival Guide for Families with Special Needs.

The guide includes valuable tips and things to consider.

<http://www.abilitypath.org/tools-resources/links--resources/holiday-survival-guide.html>

**Family Hope Foundation** hosts individuals with special needs and their families to a private monthly movie at Celebration! Cinema North in Grand Rapids the last Saturday of every month at 10:00 am. Lower sound, brighter lights and \$5 tickets make this a movie everyone can enjoy! <http://www.thefamilyhopefoundation.org> for details.



Family Hope Foundation is holding community screenings of the powerful documentary *Wretches & Jabberers*. It will change your perception about ability and intelligence as you journey with two men who have autism on their path of advocacy around the world. Screenings hosted by the Social Action Committee at Fountain Street Church — Feb. 11, April 8, June 10, August 12 and October 14 at 6 PM. **To register, contact Lara Kitts at 616-780-3839.**

Scholarships for therapy not covered by insurance are available to individuals with special needs living in West Michigan. Spring application deadline is April 1. Contact Lara Kitts at Family Hope Foundation for details, 616-780-3839.





# Association for Children's Mental Health

The Association for Children's Mental Health (ACMH) is a statewide, non-profit, family-run organization offering peer-delivered support, advocacy, education, information & referrals to families raising children with emotional, behavioral, and/or mental health challenges. Currently, ACMH has over 30 family members providing support services to families across Michigan. For more information about ACMH and the resources available in your community, please contact 1-888-ACMH-KID or [acmhadmin@sbcglobal.net](mailto:acmhadmin@sbcglobal.net).

## Support/Resource Groups for Families

### ➞ ACMH Resource & Support Group for Parents of "Bipolar/Behaviorally Challenged Children"

This group is open to any parent/caregiver who has a child with emotional, behavioral, or mental health challenges interested in connecting with other families with similar situations for support, education, information and resources.

*Where:* Havenwyck Hospital

*For dates, contact:* Marega DeLizio, ACMH Parent Support Partner/Parent Guide  
248-828-4343 or at [marega@juno.com](mailto:marega@juno.com)

### ➞ ACMH Muskegon Foster Care Parent Trauma Training

This group is for foster care parents to learn how trauma impacts children who come into their care and how they can best support and respond. All foster parents welcome — Refreshments provided.

*Where:* Muskegon County CMH, 376 E. Apple Ave., Muskegon, MI

*For dates, contact:* Leann Brow @ 231-724-6058 or [brow@cmhs.co.muskegon.mi.us](mailto:brow@cmhs.co.muskegon.mi.us)

### ➞ Y-Knot Youth Group — Kent County

This group is for youth and young people who experience emotional, behavioral, or mental health challenges in the Grand Rapids/Kent County area. This group supports youth with mental health challenges to identify positive strategies for dealing with their struggles, ways to support one another through peer-to-peer support, and opportunities to educate the community about how to better work with youth who have difficulties at home, at school, and in their communities.

*For more information, contact:* Taj Burgen, ACMH/CFP Youth Engagement Specialist  
at 616-301-0598 or by email at [acmh taj@att.net](mailto:acmh taj@att.net).

### ➞ ACMH/CFP Family Dinner — Kent County

This dinner is for families in the Kent County area who are receiving services through the System of Care (Wraparound, Parent Support Partners, Mental Health, Juvenile Justice, Education, DHS, etc.) to be able to meet other families, share experiences, support one another, and learn about community resources available to families raising children with emotional, behavioral, or mental health challenges.

*When:* 3rd Thursday of every month @ 5:30 PM

*Where:* 1260 Ekhart NE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503

*What:* Family Dinner – Bring a Dish to Pass

*Who:* Families — all ages welcome

*For more information, contact:* Mary Beth Mapes at 616-301-0598 or by email at [acmh-marybethm@att.net](mailto:acmh-marybethm@att.net)



## Support/Resource Groups for Families (continued)

### ☎ **ACMH/CFP Coffee, Tea, and TLC for Parents – Kent County**

Had a stressful morning? Trouble getting your kid off to school? Just need someone to talk to about what it is like to parent a child with special needs?

Stop by the ACMH Kent County Office, grab a cup of coffee, and relax while talking to other parents who are also raising children with emotional, behavioral, or mental health needs.

*When:* Monday through Thursday, every week from 8:30 AM to 10 AM

*Where:* 1260 Ekhart NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49503

*Who:* Parents raising children with emotional, behavioral, or mental health needs

*What:* Coffee, Tea, and TLC

*For more information, contact:* Mary Beth Mapes at 616-301-0598 or by email at [acmh-marybethm@att.net](mailto:acmh-marybethm@att.net)

## World AIDS Day: Getting to Zero

Across the United States and around the world, December 1st is recognized as a day of reflection, as well as an opportunity for AIDS awareness and education.

**T**oday, more than 33 million people worldwide and more than 1.1 million people in the United States continue to be affected by AIDS. There are 20,600 persons currently living with HIV in Michigan including 203 children 0-12 years old and 2,935 young adults 13-24 years old at the time they were diagnosed. Most 0-12 year olds (83 percent) were infected perinatally, i.e., before, during, or shortly after birth. Those infected after birth were infected through breastfeeding. The number of persons ages 13-24 years at diagnosis is now higher than the number of persons ages 25-29 years at diagnosis. Sexual and substance use behaviors may be risk factors for these young adults getting HIV according to **2012 Epidemiologic Profile HIV in Michigan**.

All individuals need to be aware of HIV risk factors. Those who are high risk need to be tested and people diagnosed with HIV need to be linked to care.

AIDS Awareness events will be happening throughout the state. World AIDS Day Detroit will host activities leading up to **Saturday, December 1, 2012** around the global theme, “Getting to Zero” — zero new HIV infections; zero AIDS-related deaths; and zero discrimination. A complete list of events, partnering agencies, specific times, locations, sponsorship and volunteer opportunities, are available on their website at: <http://www.worldaidsdaydetroit.com> or by calling (313) 757-1823. The following cities will also host events.

**Ann Arbor**  
**Battle Creek**  
**Grand Rapids**  
**Marquette**  
**Muskegon**  
**Muskegon**  
**Oak Park**  
**Rochester**  
**Westland**



## LDA News



### **LDA of Michigan has experienced a number of changes this year.**

We're on the move! Impression 5 Museum is undergoing a major renovation, and so we're being temporarily relocated in a different office space in the lower floor of the Impression 5 building. We're in transit, and hoping that our office move is completed in early December.

Conference preparations forced us to take a break from the move. Edna Felmlee, a long-time volunteer for our organization, moved to Georgia in September to live with her daughter and grandsons, and we missed her tremendously as we worked on conference details.

Our conference on November 11th and 12th was smaller than in previous years, but still a success! Following a showing of "Bully," the documentary by Lee Hirsch, at Celebration Cinema in Lansing, conference participants gathered at Kellogg Conference Center on the MSU campus for a keynote by Katy Butler, GLADD award winner, who petitioned the MPAA to change the rating of "Bully" to PG13 so that teens could see the movie without needing to be accompanied by their parents.

Following an account of her own experience with bullying and her petition drive, there was a facilitated discussion about bullying led by John Boshoven, school counselor, with Katy and her father answering questions from the audience.

On conference day, participants were enthralled by Jerome Schultz, Ph.D. (Harvard University), who gave a keynote on the negative effects of stress on students with learning disabilities, and made some suggestions for reducing stress and building success. The remaining breakout sessions were enthusiastically attended.

At lunch, we took some time to remember Flo Curtis, our volunteer Executive Director, who passed away on October 21, following a short illness. We will forever honor Flo's memory and spirit. In lieu of flowers, the family of Florence Curtis is requesting that donations be made in her honor to the Learning Disabilities Association of Michigan. She was a pioneer, a passionate advocate, and a dedicated volunteer for her entire adult life for this organization. A fund will be dedicated in her name. Send memorial gifts to: LDA of Michigan, Florence Curtis Memorial Fund, 200 Museum Dr. Suite 101, Lansing, MI 48933.

We are looking forward to our new office, new plans for our future, and new members to continue the work of LDA of Michigan.

## **Welcome to the New F2FHIEC Website!**



**Michigan Family-to-Family Health Information and Education Center is constructing a new website at [www.michiganf2fhiec.com](http://www.michiganf2fhiec.com).**

**During construction you will be able to download past editions of Family Linkages, register for trainings, link to our Facebook page and access information on the former site.**

**If you have suggestions or comments about the new site, please share them at: [info@michiganf2fhiec.com](mailto:info@michiganf2fhiec.com)**





## ➤ Michigan Alliance for Families Trainings: Dates/Times/Locations

### Transition Planning

- January 19, 2013 from 9:30 AM – 2:00 PM at Disability Connections, 409 Linden Avenue, Jackson, MI 49203

### What Every Parent Needs to Know — Content of the IEP

- January 23, 2013 from 6:15 PM – 8:15 PM at MSU, C104 Holmes, East Lansing, MI 48823

### Your Child's Transition Individualized Education Program: What You Need to Know

- January 26, 2013 from 10:30 AM — 3:30 PM at the University of Detroit Mercy School of Law, Room 226, 651 E. Jefferson Avenue, Detroit, MI 48226

### Mental Health and Education: What Parents Need to Know! Terri Henrizi, Association for Children's Mental Health (ACMH)

- January 26, 2013 from 9 AM-12 PM at the Lenawee ISD TECH Center, 1372 N. Main Street, Adrian, MI 49221

To register for Michigan Alliance for Families trainings, visit: [www.michiganallianceforfamilies.org/upcoming-events/](http://www.michiganallianceforfamilies.org/upcoming-events/)

## 2013 Winter Learning Webinar Series

Topics for our 2013 Winter Webinar Series will be announced soon. This session's topics will center on the topic of Transition. To find out more about our webinars, visit:

[www.michiganallianceforfamilies.org/webinar](http://www.michiganallianceforfamilies.org/webinar)

## ➤ Michigan Interagency Coordinating Council Meeting

### Location:

- John A. Hannah Building, State Board of Education Room, Lansing, MI from 9:30 AM to 3:30 PM.

### Next Meeting:

- February 13, 2013



## ➤ Michigan Family-to-Family Health Information and Education Trainings: Dates/Times/Locations

### Discipline for Students on IEPs

- January 11, 2013 from 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM at Macomb ISD, Room 103, 44001 Garfield Road, Clinton Township, MI 48038
- February 7, 2013 from 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM at Kalamazoo RESA, Wile Auditorium, 1819 E Milham Ave, Kalamazoo, MI 49002

### Transition Planning? What's That? I Just Want to Help Young Adults Reach Their Hopes and Dreams: Part II

- February 11, 2013 from 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM at Wayne RESA, Annex-Auditorium, 5454 Venoy Road, Wayne, MI 48184

To register for Michigan F2FHIEC trainings, visit: <http://www.michiganf2fhiec.com>. Families may call the Family Phone Line at (800) 359-3722.

## ● ANNUAL CONFERENCES



### Michigan Collaborative Early Childhood Conference January 23–25, 2013

Hyatt Regency Dearborn  
Dearborn, Michigan

For more information visit:  
<http://www.miaeyc.org/>



### 2013 Annual Spring Conference

March 20, 21 & 22, 2013  
at the Bavarian Inn, Frankenmuth

For more information visit:  
<http://www.michigantsa.com>



# The Empty Box By Scott Newport

**A**s I walk along the dark, barren sidewalks, I breathe in the crisp morning air and pick my way carefully around piles of snow left by the plows. Hanging festive lights make the neighborhood look cheerful and I smile to myself, thinking Christmas is just a few days away. The rooftops have a fresh dusting of snow that sparkles in the brilliance of the moon. As I round the corner back to my home, I notice the workshop lights are glowing at my neighbor's house again.

I've peeked into my neighbor's life often since his recent loss. I live next door. The sun hasn't risen yet and so, under the cover of dark, I leave quiet footprints in the snow between our houses. As I put my face up against his cracked workshop window my boots evoke a rustling noise as they settle in the dried stalks of last summer's daylilies.

The scene is just as it was the last time I peeked through the cottage-style panes—the room is cluttered with second-hand tools and just about everything has a thin blanket of sawdust clinging to it. And in the midst of it all is my neighbor, a middle-aged man with graying hair and calloused hands.

Resonating through the plank style siding I can hear the muffled, smooth sound of his table saw as he starts the wood on its journey. Early risers in the neighborhood never wonder what he is making when they pass by and hear his saw humming and his hammer pounding, but they do wonder how he's doing since the death of his son.

I have noticed over the last couple of days he's been building what seems to be a box. It almost looks like a toy box but it can't be. Toys have to be far from his thoughts. I know it's Christmas and all, but the death of a child must crush any thoughts of Santa's overflowing bounty.

Some mornings when I'm at the kitchen window, waiting for coffee to brew, I see my neighbor walk out to his shop and then suddenly return. Other mornings I see him just staring at boards. He seems to be inspecting each piece with a slow dedication, almost as though he's separating the meaning of each grain. One day, as I walked out to my car, I heard a horrible scream coming from his shop.

"What was that?" my wife whispered as she stuck her head out the door.

"Maybe he hit his thumb or something," I replied.

"Let's go. We're both going to be late. I'm sure he's okay," she said. And we hurried off to work.

The next morning I brushed passed him at the local gas station and nervously asked what he has been building. "A memory box," he whispered slowly. After waiting for another breath, he exhaled, "I am making it out of that old reclaimed Redwood I have behind my shop." I immediately recalled the bulging heap covered with a crumpled and torn tan tarp.

"Ah," I replied as his gaze was now downward. My eyes began to burn with tears; I tried to hold them back as he told me he

would like to have it done before Christmas, a gift for his wife. Trying to retreat, his marred hand grabbed mine and no words were spoken. Hurrying to my car, I realized he had never struck his thumb that day he screamed; the only recent scar he bore was on his face.

When I got home that night I told my wife about how I'd run into our neighbor. She's wondered, too, how he must be doing. She also shed a tear but quickly went on to making dinner. Then she started to complain about the lady with all those cats across the street.

As we ate our spaghetti, I could still envision my neighbor and his boy on summer evenings rocking on their backyard swing-set, the faded, scalloped canopy flapping above them. Even though the boy looked a little different and suffered from serious medical conditions, the father never treated him any differently than he treated his other son, who I think is about eleven years old.

On Christmas morning, my wife and I left for my folks' house for a tradition we've kept for years. We had a long drive ahead of us so, having packed the car the night before, we buckled up in the frozen pre-dawn hours and crept out of the driveway onto the cold, deserted street. Again, I noticed my neighbor was in his workshop.

"Honey, what do you think..." I trailed off.

"About what?"

"About Scott. I mean, he's out there again. He seems so alone."

"Yeah, I'm sure he is, but do we have to talk about it right now?"

"I just thought...I don't know."

As we drove down the ramp and merged onto the interstate highway, I wondered about what my wife had said. I mean, really, who wants to talk about it? I guess I wish my neighbor had someone to talk to. He seems so alone, out there in his shop every morning. Who knows if he has someone to talk to? Maybe he does. I hope he does. I wonder how I could let him know I see him, that I notice him. Maybe I should have walked over there and tapped on the window this morning—this Christmas morning—and locked eyes with him, given him a nod of the head to say "see ya later" and "hang in there." Maybe that would have let him know he's not all alone—at least for the moment.

It's so hard to watch; I just know somewhere buried in his heavy heart there is a song locked up. Yeah, it may be sad and hard to sing, but surely his song would have a melody of love. If he would just sing it to me I would find peace.

Feeling empty, I set the cruise control on our Oldsmobile and tuned the radio to a station playing non-stop Christmas carols. Behind me, the lights of our town faded in my rear-view mirror. My neighbor in his workshop, his son in the cold ground, the pain that I'm powerless to fix—I drove away from all of it. Starting to hum along with the radio, I thought about my Dad and about how he makes the best sausage-and-egg sandwiches. I can easily eat four of them.